

Organizing Notes

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A Role for the CIA in El Salvador?

As the Reagan administration seeks to increase military and economic aid to the junta in El Salvador, allegations of a different kind of American involvement—CIA covert operations—are becoming more frequent and alarming.

Particular attention has been focused on possible CIA responsibility for developing a February 23 State Department "White Paper" which "proves" that the Soviet Union and Cuba have provided substantial aid to Salvadorean leftists. The evidence has been used as a major lobbying tool by the Reagan administration to increase aid to the junta. It has also served as a rationale for labeling opposition to current American policy as "communist orchestrated."

According to ex-CIA officers Philip Agee and Ralph McGehee—who have attacked the White Paper in recent articles—the document resembles propaganda pieces they saw prepared during their service with the Agency. Agee and McGehee have attacked the paper for inaccurate translations, inconsistencies, and in some cases, for deliberate fabrication of evidence. In the past, the CIA has used similar documents and press releases to "prove" Communist infiltration in Guatemala (1954), Indonesia (1965), Chile (the late 1960's) and Vietnam, among other places.

In late January, reports of a series of Soviet-Cuban sponsored guerilla raids into El Salvador from Nicaragua were widely circulated. In an article published in the March 23, 1981 issue of *The Nation*, Ralph McGehee wrote that, after the guerilla raids, "two Salvadorean government officials resigned, charging that the 'two invasions' were staged in order to justify the sending in of American troops." McGehee characterized the reports as a "probable CIA deception operation."

Adding to speculation about possible CIA involvement in El Salvador, CIA supporters and critics have drawn parallels in the media between US efforts to aid land reform in El Salvador, and the Phoenix Program in Vietnam, carried out a decade ago under CIA direction. US encouragement of Salvadorean land reform has come chiefly from the American Institute for Free Labor Development, founded in 1962 as a joint effort of American labor and multinational corporations to encourage social and educational development in the third

world. In the past, AIFLD has been the subject of some controversy, carrying with it charges of complicity with the CIA in Latin America.

Finally, the Reagan administration's hasty attempt to push Congress toward repealing the five-year-old Clark Amendment ban on CIA covert operations in Angola, further increases skepticism about the extent of US "aid" to troubled areas of the world, especially El Salvador. (See *Organizing Notes*, Vol. 5, No. 3.)

On the Homefront:

Reagan Views the Opposition

Protest against American intervention in El Salvador has been intense in the past few months. Ronald Reagan had a few words to say about opposition to his policy in a March 29 interview with the *Washington Post*:

... But I do think that we have to recognize that the campaign against what we're doing, the helping of El Salvador, is a pretty concerted and well-orchestrated thing, propaganda that I think has confused a great many people and many well-meaning people ... it's even been world-wide. And you find the same slogans being used in demonstrations in European countries about the United States in El Salvador. You find it here ... There were some of those demonstrators in Canada on our recent trip. Incidentally, that's another thing we've done in these first 48 days. The placards were the same. The slogans were the same there.

And you can't, when we have been able to establish with our white paper that this is Soviet-backed, that it is Cuban-backed, the surrogates of Cuba are in the front line in providing the material, training of the guerilla fighters, all of these things, you have to assume that they must also have a hand then in the propaganda.

Articles, Books, Films on the CIA Page 8

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